(b) the other countries who are staking their claim for a permanent seat in the expanded Security Council;

(c) what would be the total Membership of the expanded Security Council; and

(d) What steps India contemplate to achieve their goal of permanent membership of the Security Council?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes.

(b) and (c) There are other contenders for permanent membership of the Security Council but, with countries unable to agree on the criteria or the methodology for expansion, it is difficult, at this stage, to speculate on the total membership of an enlarged Security Council.

(d) After making known our candidature for the permanent membership in 1994, we have pursued this objective at each session of the UN General Assembly, in the Working Group set up within the UN to discuss the issue and in our bilateral interactions with other UN members. Several countries, including many of the Parmanent Members, have supported India's candidature. India will continue its efforts to secure wide support.

Indian Fishermen in Pakistani Jails

501. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian fishing boats were captured in the Kutch sea by the Pakistani Marine guard recently;

(b) if so, whether according to the latest count, 319 Indian fishermen are languishing in Pakistani jails and 60 fishing boats, each worth Rs. 15 lakh are in their custody; and

(c) the details of efforts Government propose to make in order to bring the captured fishermen to their home land?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) As per available information, 319 Indian fishermen and 61 fishing boats are in custody in Pakistan. They were apprehended by Pakistan Marine Security Agency during the period October, 2002 to April, 2003.

(c) Government has consistently taken up the issue of their release and repatriation with the Government of Pakistan through diplomatic channels. As a result, they have been provided consular access. Their nationality has also been confirmed. Government of Pakistan has been asked to fix an early date for their release and repatriation.

UN peace keeping forces for Iraq

502. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that UN Secretary-General has declined to send UN peace keeping forces in Iraq;

(b) if so, what reasons have been attributed therefor;

(c) the considerations that have promoted Government to consider US request for sending Indian forces to Iraq;

(d) whether any decision has been taken in the matter; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) The UNSG has not been asked to send UN peace keeping forces to Iraq so far.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) to (e) Responding to an appeal contained in UN Security Council Resolution 1483 and a U.S. request, the Government considered the question of sending Indian troops to Iraq. The Government decided on July 14 as follows:-

"The Government of India has given careful thought to the question of sending Indian troops to Iraq.